

Hijacker's Insanity Called Feigned by a Psychiatrist

By ROBERT LINDSEY

A psychiatrist asserted yesterday in Federal Court in Brooklyn that a confessed airliner hijacker had systematically evaded prison for years by cleverly feigning insanity.

Dr. David Abrahamsen of Manhattan, a practicing psychiatrist testified for the Government in the trial of Garrett Brock Trapnell.

Trapnell, who is 34 years old, has admitted that he hijacked a Los Angeles-to-New York Trans World Airlines jet last Jan. 29 and tried to extort \$306,800 from the line. But he pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity.

The hijacking ended at Kennedy International Airport when Trapnell, who had smuggled a gun aboard the plane in a plaster cast on his left arm, was shot by a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent posing as a relief crew member.

Earlier in the trial, now in its fifth week, a psychologist and three other psychiatrists, including Dr. David Hubbard of Dallas, who has written a book on skyjackers and had interviewed Trapnell for the book after an earlier hijacking, had testified that Trapnell was a "paranoid-schizophrenic."

They noted that he had a long history of mental illness and had been hospitalized in mental institutions at least 10 times after arrests on charges that included holding up banks, stealing jewels and kidnapping.

Dr. Abrahamsen, who is 60 years old, slightly built and partly bald, is the author of 10 books and a consultant to the psychiatry department at Roosevelt Hospital.

Speaking in a Norwegian accent, he said he had interviewed the defendant twice and was convinced that he was not insane, but a "malingerer" who had learned how to fool a string of psychiatrists by mimicking the symptoms of the insane.

"Mr. Trapnell is very perceptive, and I would say quite seductive," he said. "In talking with him I could understand how psychiatrists could be persuaded by this man.

"He was and has been very successful deceiving quite many psychiatrists and correction people to get them to believe he was insane. Mr. Trapnell has possibly studied or read a great deal about psychiatry and also psychology."

Dr. Abrahamsen said he had become suspicious about the defendant when he heard that he had claimed to have led a "dual personality", in which he lived a life part of the time under a different name. "In 40 years I have seen that occur only once," he said.

He said the defendant's pattern of committing crime then being sent to mental institutions instead of prisons and often escaping from the institutions, and his ease in describ-

ing the symptoms of this mental problems helped convince him that he was not telling the truth.

In testimony last week, a one-time cellmate of Trapnell's, George Padilla, contended that Trapnell had told him in 1966 that he had studied psychiatry and had given him advice on how to feign mental illness.

The trial is being held before Federal District Judge George Rosling at the Federal Courthouse at 225 Cadman Plaza East. It has drawn the intense interest of Federal Air Security officers because of an epidemic of hijackings last year in which huge cash ransoms were demanded and, in some cases, suspects contended after their arrest that they were driven by mental problems rather than greed.

As Dr. Abrahamsen spoke, Trapnell, a slender dark-haired man with a mustache and intense dark eyes, watched carefully and fidgeted with his hands on a table before him.

After Trapnell commandeered the Boeing 707 last year with 101 passengers and crewmen, he demanded to speak to President Nixon, persuaded TWA to fly two lawyers and Dr. Hubbard to New York so he could speak with them and demanded that Angela Davis, the radical leader then in prison, be freed.

The precise amount of money he demanded, \$306,800, is a sum that he said he had been swindled out of in the purchase of a boat in Miami. He said he wanted to get his money back.

Gaining Attention

After Dr. Abrahamsen contended that the hijacking was a result of a well-thought-out plan of a man in control of his thoughts, Mr. Trapnell's attorney, in cross-examination, sought to discredit his testimony.

He suggested that the demands for the freedom of Miss Davis and his other requests were not consistent with a well-calculated criminal venture. Dr. Abrahamsen acknowledged that there were certain aspects of the hijacking that showed he was trying to "draw attention" to himself, but said "bravado in itself is not a symptom of paranoid schizophrenia."

If Trapnell were paranoid schizophrenic — someone he described as being mentally incapacitated by hallucinations, illusions, confusion and grave feelings of persecution — he could not have carried out the crime, Dr. Abrahamsen asserted. The use of a cast to conceal his weapon, the use of a not and other aspects of the crime, he testified, were inconsistent with such an illness.

"Schizophrenia is not a headache. It is a very serious condition that you cannot walk in and out of," he said.

The case is expected to go to a jury this week.